

THE LITERARY GUILD REVIEW

Wings

DECEMBER • 1954






The Guild presents the DECEMBER 1954 Selection

Mr. Maugham Himself

A Collection of Writings by W. Somerset Maugham

Selected by JOHN BEECROFT

W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM is probably the most important person in the world of writing today. He is known as an accomplished storyteller, an expert novelist, a witty dramatist, and a sensitive and penetrating essayist. Since the publication of *Of Human Bondage* in 1915, Mr. Maugham has always had a large and devoted number of readers in America. Recently he celebrated his eightieth birthday—an anniversary that must have amazed him for he considered himself very old at seventy and was surprised when he reached seventy-five. Recently Queen Elizabeth made him a Companion of Honour, a distinction rarely conferred and then only for exceptional accomplishment. This official recognition came to Mr. Maugham long after his readers



had already accepted him and established his name high in popular favor. America's appreciation of his writing has always given him joy.

Mr. Maugham has led an unusually varied life. He has lived through the greatest changes in world history. Born when the stately homes of England were still stately, he has seen the established order shaken and finally swept away. In World War I, Mr. Maugham acted as secret agent for his government and later used his experiences as plots for some of his most famous stories. In World War II, he had to escape invading armies in the South of France and leave his magnificent villa, with its art treasures, to looters. During the last years of the nineteenth century he studied medicine, but as soon as he qualified he realized that writing

was his true vocation. *Of Human Bondage* was his first big success as a novelist and is generally considered his best book. Maugham's plays were produced in American and English theaters and added to his fame and wealth. His short stories, many of which are the result of his experiences in the South Seas and in the Orient are enduring favorites.

Mr. Maugham had drawn so heavily on his own adventures for material for his stories and had revealed his beliefs and thoughts so frankly in his essays and autobiographical writings (notably *The Summing Up*) that he has never felt it necessary to write an autobiography. My idea in compiling this collection was to present to the reader the most personal of his revelations—those writings in which he reveals his character, his interest, his personality and his soul. As each



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one of these selections was written with great sincerity, they represent the best of Maugham.

No other collection of Mr. Maugham's works has included *Of Human Bondage* in its entirety and this version of *The Summing Up* appears for the first time—outside its publication in a fifteen-dollar limited edition, which is now regarded as a collector's item. The shorter pieces in this book reveal other characteristics of Maugham's personality which are certain to intrigue the reader.

It has given me deep satisfaction to compile *Mr. Maugham Himself*. The volume is not only a tribute to a great writer, it is a tribute to his many devoted readers.

Mr. Maugham Explains the Novel

EXCERPTS FROM AN ADDRESS GIVEN BY MR. MAUGHAM
ON HIS PRESENTING THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT OF HIS
NOVEL *Of Human Bondage* TO THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

... I have never pretended to be anything but a story teller. It has amused me to tell stories and I have told a great many. But as you know, story telling just for the sake of the story is not an activity that is in favour with the intelligentsia. It is looked upon as a debased form of art. That seems strange to me since the desire to listen to stories appears to be as deeply rooted in the human animal as the sense of property. Since the beginning of history men have gathered round the camp fire or in a group in the market place to listen to the telling of a story. That the desire is as strong as





ever it was is shown by the amazing popularity of detective stories in our own day. For the habitual reader of them can generally guess who the murderer is before he is half way through and if he reads on to the end it is only because he wants to know what happens next, which means that he is interested in the story.

But we novelists are on the whole a modest lot and when we are told that it is our business, not merely to entertain, but to deal with social security, economics, the race question, and the state of the world generally, we are pleased and flattered. It is very nice to think that we can instruct our fellow men and by our wisdom improve their lot. It gives us a sense of responsibility and indeed puts us on a level of respectability with bank presidents. For my part I think it is an abuse to use the novel as a pulpit or a platform, and I think readers are misguided when they suppose they can thus acquire knowledge without trouble.

It is a great nuisance that knowledge cannot be acquired without trouble. It can only be acquired by hard work. It would be fine if we could swallow the powder of profitable information made palatable by the jam of fiction. But the truth is that, so made palatable, we can't be sure that the powder will be profitable. I suggest to you that the knowledge the novelist imparts is biased and thus unreliable and it is better not to know a thing at all than to know it in a distorted fashion. If readers wish to inform themselves of the pressing problems of the day they will do better to read, not novels but the books that specifically deal with them.

The novelist is a natural propagandist. He can't help it however hard he tries. He loads his dice. By the mere fact of introducing a character to your notice early in his novel he enlists your interest and your sympathy in that character. He takes sides. He arranges facts to suit his purpose. Well, that is not the way a book of scientific or informative value is written. There is no reason why a novelist should be anything but a novelist. He should know a little about a great many things, but it is unnecessary, and sometimes even harmful, for him to be a specialist in any particular subject. The novelist need not eat a whole sheep to know what mutton tastes like; it is enough if he eats a chop. Applying then his imagination and his creative faculty to the chop he has eaten he can give you a very good idea of an Irish stew, but when he goes on from this to give you his views on sheep raising, the wool industry and the political situation in Australia I think it is well to accept his ideas with reserve. . . .

Philip knew he had much to learn about painting; but Fanny's intense, dogmatic criticisms only depressed him more.

I suggest to you that it is enough for

a novelist to be a good novelist. It is unnecessary for him to be a prophet, a preacher, a politician or a leader of thought. Fiction is an art and the purpose of art is to please. If in many quarters this is not acknowledged I can only suppose it is because of the unfortunate impression so widely held that there is something shameful in pleasure. But all pleasure is good. Only, some pleasures have mischievous consequences and it is better to eschew them. And of course there are intelligent pleasures and unintelligent pleasures. I venture to put the reading of a good novel amongst the most



intelligent pleasures that man can enjoy.

And I should like to remind you in passing that reading should be enjoyable. I read some time ago a work by a learned professor which purported to teach his students how to read a book. He told them all sorts of elaborate ways to do this, but he forebore to mention that there could be any enjoyment to be got out of reading the books he recommended. In fact, he made what should be a delight into an irksome chore, and, I should have thought, effectively eradicated from those young minds any desire ever again to open a book after they were once freed from academic bondage.

Let us consider for a moment the qualities that a good novel should have.

Griffiths and Mildred flirted outrageously, while Philip wondered if he could hold her love against the debonair charms of his best friend.



It should have a coherent and plausible story, a variety of probable incidents, characters that are living and freshly observed, and natural dialogue. It should be written in a style suitable to the subject. If the novelist can do that I think he has done all that should be asked of him. I think he is wise not to concern himself too greatly with current affairs, for if he does his novel will lose its point as soon as they are no longer current. H. G. Wells once gave me an edition of his complete works and one day when he was staying with me he ran his fingers along the many volumes and said to me: "You know, they're dead. They dealt with matters of topical interest and now of course they're unreadable." I don't think he was quite right. If some of his novels can no longer be read with interest it is because he was always more concerned with the type than with the individual, with the general rather than with the particular. . . .

It is obviously to the novelist's advantage that he should be a person of broad culture, but the benefit to him of that is the enrichment of his own personality. His business is with human nature and he can best acquire knowledge of that by observation and by exposing himself to all the vicissitudes of human life.

About the Author Known and respected throughout the world, Somerset Maugham has achieved a life filled with rare acclaim. His novels, short stories, and plays delight large audiences in every walk of life, because of their maturity and lack of pretentiousness. Orphaned at the age of ten, Somerset Maugham was brought up by his clergyman uncle. From the beginning of his school days he wanted to write, but his uncle thought one of the professions would be a more worthy career. He thus studied medicine, and after six years was licensed as a physician—but his passionate interest in writing had not diminished. He then went to Paris, where for ten long laborious years he struggled and starved attempting to earn a living by writing. Finally success came with his play, *Lady Frederick*, and never again did he have to worry about a livelihood. Today, with so many of his books ranked among the classics, Mr. Maugham's success is attributed to the fact that he "never compromises with the truth as he sees it."

The colorful illustrations for this issue of WINGS were painted by the nationally known artist George Englert.

JOHN BEECROFT—EDITOR IN CHIEF, LITERARY GUILD OF AMERICA

Here are brief reviews of some outstanding books which members may order at the price listed, subject to change without notice. Their purchase carries no Bonus Book credit.

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Witty, lively and sometimes naughty retelling of a great epic of Hindu literature, in which godlike characters become all too human and their ancient civilization parallels our own.

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MY BROTHER'S KEEPER

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THE LITTLE LAUNDRESS AND THE FEARFUL KNIGHT

by Bertram Bloch \$2.50

A delightful fantasy of King Arthur's time that reverses the rules of chivalry to provide laughter and enchantment for children and adults alike.

OSLO INTRIGUE

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Filled with exciting incident, this true adventure story tells how a young English widow innocently joined the Norwegian underground and became involved in nerve-racking exploits.

MY SEVERAL WORLDS

by Pearl S. Buck \$5.00

Mrs. Buck's autobiography details her private and professional life, here and in China, with warmth and wisdom.

I MARRIED THE KLONDIKE

by Laura Beatrice Berton \$4.50

A delightful tale of the unusual life in a sub-Arctic town told by a Canadian who went to the Klondike in 1907 just after the gold rush to teach for one year—but stayed for 25!

MADAMI

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A New York artist tells of adventurous years with the Belgian Congo Pygmies. She and her anthropologist husband ran a jungle hotel whose guests were often VIPs, a hospital whose pygmy patients might be victims of leopards.

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The city editor of the Los Angeles *Examiner* recalls hilariously the famous news stories in his career and tells frankly of his inspiring victory over alcoholism.

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THE DEVIL'S LAUGHTER

by Frank Yerby

Jean Paul Marin, the most magnificent hero ever portrayed by "the modern Dumas" leaps from the blazing pages of this tale of passion and terror, set in the wanton excitement of the French Revolution. By the author of *The Foxes of Harrow*, *The Vixens* and *The Saracen Blade*.

THE CORIOLI AFFAIR

by Mary Deasy

The tender story of a forbidden romance between a young Irish schoolteacher and a river captain who was already married. Jed and Lacey's love affair reached sublime heights, but how were they to know that it would unleash the surging hatred of a town gone mad for violence?

THE GIPSY IN THE PARLOUR by Margery Sharp

The best-selling author of *Cluny Brown* now brings us another revealing human tale about a fascinating dark-eyed young woman who held an entire family captive in her evil web. Good-natured Stephen Sylvester brought home his languid, lovely bride-to-be . . . Then *three* days before the wedding, Fanny met and fell in love with Stephen's nephew, Charles Sylvester . . . Charles whom she called "handsome as a young god." And who also happened to be heir to the entire Sylvester estate!

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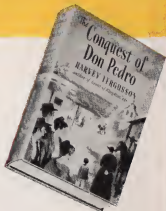
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Leo Mendes settled in the small town of Don Pedro on his doctor's orders. The sun and air of New Mexico gradually restored his health and vitality—and his longing for a wife, a home and children. But Leo found himself passionately attracted to the slender and lovely Doña Lupe Vierra, *the wife of his business rival*. They became lovers . . . until another woman entered Leo's life—Doña Lupe's niece, the lovely young Magdalena. And Leo married the girl—only to face an insurmountable problem!



BLESS THIS HOUSE

by Norah Lofts

This extraordinary novel spans four centuries and unravels the mystery of Merravay, a stately yet strangely haunted English country house. A masterpiece of suspense and entertainment by the author of *Silver Nutmeg*.

CAPTAIN OF THE MEDICI

by John J. Pugh

Cia had loved him since childhood, Pietro, the blacksmith's boy. But could she—an innkeeper's daughter—hope to win the brave captain now that he had been made lord of a great manor in Tuscany?

UNTO A GOOD LAND by Vilhelm Moberg

This is the book of sixteen who came in that hot July of 1850 . . . among them *Ulrika*, the harlot, who yearned for virtue as other women might secretly dream of sin . . . *Karl Oskar*, the seeker, who hungered for land and work to match his Viking strength . . . *Robert*, the liar, who sought for riches but not for work . . . and *Kristina*, who longed only for the home left forever behind . . . This is one family's part in the story that still lives somewhere within all of us whose ancestors—early or late—came in fear and in hope to this good land—America.

Remember: Purchase
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GUILD NEWS

Not by bread alone: "The Persians have a proverb: 'If thou of fortune be bereft and in thy store there but be left two loaves, sell one and with the dole buy hyacinths to feed thy soul,'" writes Mrs. Carl Beadles of Oakwood, Va. "Membership in the Literary Guild has truly been my hyacinths ever since I joined. Ours is a budget which would not ordinarily include Literary Guild membership, but we felt the books we get from you are worth cutting down on some of life's necessities."

Guild aids foreign bride: Mrs. Ferdinand Hochleiter of Bynumville, Mo., writes, "As a high school student in a big city in Germany, I married an American school teacher. One of the many things I missed living over here in a rural area, was my being unable to pick up a good book from one of the numerous book stores in my former home town. So I joined the Literary Guild about a year ago, and am thankful, that every book I receive from you, I know will be good. Reading your fine selections and enjoying them has even helped me to fight an occasional spell of homesickness."

No historical errors in *Désirée*: "As I am very much interested in the Napoleonic era, it was very satisfying to note that the historical data in *Désirée*, by Annemarie Selinko, was so authentic," says Mrs. E. R. Kenyon of Monroe, Mich. "I looked up each historical event and date in my encyclopedia, and the facts were, without exception, true in every detail. While one can gain so much relaxation in reading fiction, it is gratifying and commendable to note the merit of fact beyond fiction."

Author with good legs: Irving Stone (*Love Is Eternal*) says, "I always try to cover on foot the entire ground of a story, so that I will see the actual places my characters lived, smell the smells of the countryside, and know intimately the interiors of the houses and the feel of the surrounding countryside. For *Love Is Eternal*, I followed the route of the Lincolns, starting in Kentucky, and not only going to the birthplace, the homes, and the schools Mary Todd had attended in Lexington, but also following the trail from Abraham's birth and growing up across Kentucky and Indiana and Illinois. The entire book, from its inception to its delivery to the publisher, covered an even three years, of which one year was devoted to research."

Next month, members will be reading: *The Adventurers*, by Ernest Haycox, a compelling and exciting story of a girl and two men who were the survivors of a disastrous shipwreck.

The writer of any letter the editors print in whole or in part on this page will receive a free choice of a Guild book. Send your letters to The Literary Guild Editors, Room 1503, 575 Madison Ave., New York 22, N.Y.



LOVE IS ETERNAL

BY
Irving Stone

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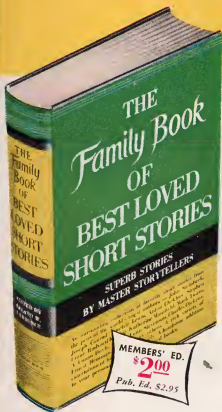
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THE NECKLACE Guy de Maupassant

A PASSION IN THE DESERT

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THE KILLERS Ernest Hemingway

THE LEADER OF THE PEOPLE John Steinbeck

WINGS — THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF
THE LITERARY GUILD of AMERICA, Inc.
GARDEN CITY • NEW YORK

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